

# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, February 13, 2008

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Wednesday, February 13, 2008

## Editorial

# Foster care reforms need more urgency

### The Detroit News

New reports continue to raise concerns about the adequacy of Michigan's child welfare system. The state has made improvements during the past year, but more remains to be done.

An advocacy group called Children's Rights is suing the state in a class-action case, calling for court-ordered improvements in the foster care program. A research paper that is part of the group's complaint contends that the state's standards for investigating child abuse are imprecise and case workers are overwhelmed and inadequately supervised. The report attributes at least five deaths of children to the problems in the system.

A previous report by a different group issued earlier this month, this time commissioned by the federal court hearing the case, also made damaging findings. They include the department's placement of children with relatives without investigating their fitness; a lack of physical exams and dental care for large percentages of children in the foster care system, and a lack of adequate follow-up by caseworkers in visiting the children.

The state's Human Services Department didn't help itself when it issued a statement that in part was unduly dismissive of the findings of the Children's Rights investigators. That's unfortunate, because the same statement also outlined positive steps the agency is taking to improve the lives of children in the state's care.

The department, with additional appropriations approved in this year's budget, is filling vacancies in existing positions in the children's services division and establishing 300 new positions, including 50 new supervisors and clerical support workers to ease the time crunch on caseworkers and investigators.

Under a new law that went into effect last month, it is also broadening background checks on people taking in foster children to comply with tougher federal standards.

And it is stepping up training in child protection for supervisors and coordinating training with the State Police for child welfare workers.

These are good and necessary steps to easing the conditions that have led to several child injuries and deaths in recent years, which has resulted in numerous investigations, trials and calls for reform.

But still more reforms are needed. They should be addressed in a package of bills that should soon see action in the Legislature.

A number of judges are calling for changes, including giving judges more discretion before they are required to permanently terminate parental rights, throwing children into the foster care system. Instead, they call for a system in which judges may appoint temporary guardians for children and remove them from a troubled home -- but allow parents a chance to rehabilitate themselves and reclaim their children if a court agrees.

The judges, such as Chief Wayne Probate Judge Milton Mack, also want guardians to have to report to the courts at least annually on the status of children and courts to be informed if children are moved from one foster home to another -- which may indicate problems that need judicial intervention.

While there have been improvements, they are coming too slowly, says Mack.

That should change. Children's lives are at stake.

### Find this article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080213/OPINION01/802130313>

## 25 arrests made in raid targeting food card fraud

February 13, 2008

By DAN CORTEZ

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

An intricately coordinated raid 18 months in the making resulted in the arrests Tuesday of more than two dozen business owners and employees involved in a fraud that costs the state about \$55 million annually.

At least 25 people were arrested when about 200 state, federal and local officials descended on the stores, mostly in Dearborn and Detroit.

### Advertisement

The fraud focused on Bridge Cards, the electronic debit cards that replaced government-issued food stamps in 2001.

Instead of using the cards to buy food, State Police said some card owners collaborated with store owners to trade them in for cash at the stores -- often at half the value of the cards. The stores, in turn, collected the full amount on the debit cards from the state.

About \$16 million is lost each year in Wayne County alone, according to State Police.

Investigators served search and arrest warrants and seized passports, as well as several bank accounts and assets totaling about \$1 million.

That amount is expected to grow as the investigation widens, State Police said.

"The cost to taxpayers as a result of this fraudulent activity is staggering," Attorney General Mike Cox said in announcing the charges.

Instead of misdemeanor charges for small transactions, the Attorney General's Office filed felony charges of conducting an ongoing criminal enterprise, conspiracy and electronic benefit transfer card fraud. The charges could result in prison sentences of up to 20 years, as well as restitution.

The hustle goes like this:

Bridge Card holders take their cards -- perhaps with \$200 in benefits -- to a store where the owner will pay them \$100 in cash.

The store owner then swipes the card, which tells state computers to pay the store \$200 for the groceries sold to the Bridge Card holders, even though nothing has been sold.

Meanwhile, the card holders have \$100 to buy what they otherwise can't with a Bridge Card, such as drugs, liquor or lottery tickets.

"We're just hitting the tip of the iceberg," said Michigan State Police Lt. Marty Bugbee, the commander of criminal investigations.

The state plans to crack down on Bridge Card recipients who abuse the system, too.

While store owners can lose the right to accept Bridge Cards, state investigators said recipients can be banned from receiving benefits for one or two years -- or for life, depending on how egregious the fraud.

"The intent is to put food in the homes of people who need it," said Andrew LaFleur, assistant special agent-in-charge for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which hands out the benefits. "Those families lose out in this."

About \$115 million in benefits is handed out statewide each month, according to the state Department of Human Services, which oversees the food program in Michigan.

In December, the state issued benefits to 1.2 million residents -- the highest number ever, officials said.

The prime locale for the fraud is Wayne County, where \$33.5 million in benefits is spent every month.

State investigators estimate that \$1.6 million of that is lost through fraud.

Bugbee said some stores claim \$30,000 in benefits through Bridge Cards each month, even though the average is about \$2,000 a month.

Police also have seen fraud in other areas, such as recyclable containers, liquor and cigarettes.

Owners of stores that sell the products buy them outside of Michigan to avoid taxes, then sell them at marked-up prices and pocket the difference.

The combined impact of fraud through Bridge Cards, recyclable containers, liquor and cigarettes amounts to more than \$300 million lost each year.

State legislators also have taken notice.

Rep. Steve Bieda, D-Warren, helped sponsor legislation that would require beverage manufacturers to put a code on all bottles and cans that are sold in Michigan and require that automated bottle return machines be programmed to read the Michigan-only code so they accept only containers sold in Michigan. Both are in committee.

Bieda, who also has discussed Bridge Card fraud with state investigators, said the strain of the frauds are robbing the state when it can least afford it.

"You're talking about some serious dollars there," he said. "If somebody's ripping you off blindly, you're foolish not to go after them. They're stealing from the welfare of the people of the state of Michigan."

Contact **DAN CORTEZ** at 586-469-1827 or [dcortez@freepress.com](mailto:dcortez@freepress.com).

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<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080213/NEWS06/802130344>

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Wednesday, February 13, 2008

## **Food stamp fraud sting targets 27**

### **Dozens charged with ties to trafficking ring accused of over \$1.5M in bogus transactions.**

**Mark Hicks / The Detroit News**

**DETROIT** -- Following a collaborative state investigation, 27 people associated with eight local stores are facing charges for alleged ties to food stamp trafficking totaling more than \$1.5 million, Attorney General Mike Cox announced Tuesday.

"We not only want to arrest those who are allegedly responsible," said Rusty Hills, a spokesman for Cox, "but send a signal to others that we are going to continue being vigilant across the state in prosecuting this crime."

The Attorney General's Office partnered with several entities, including the FBI, Michigan State Police, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the state departments of Human Services and Treasury for the investigation, which continued for more than a year, Hills said.

The investigation involved undercover operations during which confidential informants and police officers were equipped with devices to record video and audio footage of the fraudulent transactions with the store owners and employees, officials said.

Detective 1st Lt. Marty Bugbee, commander of the Michigan State Police criminal investigations section, explained that in some cases, a portion of funds on state-issued Bridge/Electronic Benefit Transfer debit cards were transferred from recipient to store accounts.

The Office of Inspector General, a criminal justice agency within the Michigan Department of Human Services, estimates about 4 percent of food stamp transactions are fraudulent -- totaling about \$4.6 million monthly or \$55.2 million annually. The office estimates food stamp fraud in Wayne County totals about \$16 million each year.

"It's wasting taxpayers' money," Bugbee said.

About \$600,000, records, computers and other items were seized from homes and businesses during search warrants executed Tuesday, Bugbee said.

The defendants are charged with a felony violation of the food stamp act, which carries a maximum of 10 years imprisonment and \$250,000 in penalties.

They also are charged with conducting a continuing criminal enterprise, which is punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment and \$100,000 fine as well as criminal forfeiture of proceeds; conspiracy, which carries up to five years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine; card fraud, which carries four years imprisonment and a \$4,000 fine; and money laundering, which carries 10 years imprisonment and \$100,000 in fines.

By late Tuesday, more than 20 were in police custody, Bugbee said. Arraignments are expected this week at 36th District Court.

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<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080213/METRO/802130384>

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Michigan Report

February 12, 2008

## **STATE UNDERTAKES MAJOR RAID ON FOOD STAMP FRAUD**

A major raid that involved the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Departments of State Police, Human Services and Attorney General resulted in 27 people arrested for alleged involvement in food stamp trafficking worth more than \$1.5 million.

[Attorney General Mike Cox](#) said the cost to taxpayers for the crime is "staggering." And State Police Director Peter Munoz said the operation should be a warning to all that "this type of fraud will not be tolerated." The raids occurred after an ongoing investigation into operations that involved eight stores in Detroit - most of them gas stations or party stores - using undercover police officers or informants who would receive cash for food stamps.

If convicted of the felony charges, the defendants face up to 10 years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000. In addition, the owners of the stores involved are also charged with running criminal enterprises and face imprisonment of up to 20 years in prison. The owners of the stores also face charges for conspiracy, electronic benefit fraud transfer card fraud and money laundering.

# ClickOnDetroit.com

## Police Arrest Bridge Card Scammers

POSTED: 5:42 pm EST February 12, 2008

UPDATED: 5:46 pm EST February 12, 2008

Police raided more than a dozen neighborhood stores and homes Tuesday in a crackdown on what police say is an organized scam to take money from the state.

Michigan State Police teamed with several local officers and federal agents to put the brakes on a multimillion-dollar Michigan Bridge Card scam.

A [Bridge Card](#) is a debit card issued by the state to low-income people enrolled in food assistance programs.

Police say some store owners are abusing the system and stealing from the state.

Marty Bugbee, of the Michigan State Police, said some store employees trade cash, lottery tickets cigarettes or alcohol for a higher Bridge Card fee instead of eligible food items like bread, cereal and fruit.

"Everybody's affected. Everybody who works here. Everybody who pays taxes are paying for this scam," said Marty Bugbee of the Michigan State Police.

Police raided 19 places from Detroit to Dearborn to Hamtramck and arrested more than 14 people. The raids were the result of an 18-month investigation.

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Release Date: February 12, 2008

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**Contact:** Rusty Hills or Matt Frendewey, Media Contacts 517-373-8060

**Agency:** Attorney General

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## State Busts \$1.5 Million Food-Stamp-for-Cash Ring

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February 12, 2008

**LANSING** - Attorney General Mike Cox today announced charges against 27 people associated with eight stores in Detroit who are alleged to be involved in food stamp trafficking totaling more than \$1.5 million.

"This is a crime against taxpayers and those who are most vulnerable," said Cox. "The cost to taxpayers as a result of this fraudulent activity is staggering."

The Michigan Department of Human Resources, Office of Inspector General, conservatively estimates that about 4% of all food stamp transactions are fraudulent. There is \$115 million spent with food stamps every month in Michigan. This means approximately \$4.6 million in fraudulent transactions take place every month in Michigan (or \$55.2 million per year). Wayne County alone accounts for slightly less than 1/3 of the food stamp transactions, which translates into an estimated food stamp fraud in Wayne County alone of around \$16 million per year.

"Let today's operation be a warning that this type of fraud will not be tolerated," said Col. Peter C. Munoz, Director of the Michigan State Police. "Working with our partners at the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Michigan Attorney General's Office, and the United States Department of Agriculture, we will ensure that food benefits are used to help those in need rather than to pad the pocketbooks of business owners."

"This operation was a great example of teamwork, and I want to thank all of the various departments and agencies that made today's arrests possible," Cox said. "My office teamed up with the Michigan State Police, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Michigan Department of Human Services and together we will continue to fight this fraudulent activity."

Throughout the duration of this investigation, investigators utilized confidential informants and/or police officers working in an undercover capacity to conduct fraudulent transactions where they would receive cash for food stamp benefits. During these undercover operations, the confidential informants and/or police officers were equipped with devices for recording video and/or audio footage of the fraudulent transactions with the store owners and/or employees. The defendants are charged with a felony violation of the food stamp act for which the maximum penalties are 10 years imprisonment and/or \$250,000 in penalties. In addition, the stores and its owners and employees are charged with conducting a continuing criminal enterprise (punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment and/or \$100,000 and criminal forfeiture of proceeds), conspiracy (up to 5 years imprisonment and/or \$10,000 fine), electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card fraud (4 years imprisonment and/or \$4,000 fine), and money laundering (10 year imprisonment and/or \$100,000 in fines).

A criminal charge is merely an accusation and all persons are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The following lists the various defendants and the stores with which they are associated:

STORES	DEFENDANTS
Citgo	Nabil Shamel, owner



8351 Woodward Detroit, Michigan	Jamal Chami, employee Waad Fawazi, employee
Livernois Gasoline 7645 Livernois Detroit, Michigan	Hafaid Musleh-Mohmood Alkahif, owner Abdul Fattah-Mohmood Alkahif, employee Dheyab M. Alquhaif, employee Ammar Mahmood Gobah, employee Mustafa Mohamen-Ahmed Alqohaif, employee Yousef Mohamed-Ahmed Alqohaif, employee
U&I Petro 8820 Wyoming Detroit, Michigan	Saleh Algathaithi, owner Saif Ahmed Alghathie, employee Hassan Ali Hussein, employee
C&M Mini Mart 18420 James Couzens Detroit, Michigan	Abdo Mahfouz, owner Ali Abdo Mahfouz, employee Tarek Moshen Baderddine, employee
Rowan Party Store 7000 Rowan Detroit, Michigan	Saeb Abdul-Ghani Abdul-Ghani, owner Joseph Soliman Elrubi, employee Maher Diab, employee
Big Al's Marathon 3910 Grand River Detroit, Michigan	Hussien Kamel Beydoun, owner Ali Hussein Beydoun, employee
Van Dyke Petro 19030 Van Dyke Detroit, Michigan	Taha Ahmad Dika, owner Nizar Ali Nazha, employee Michael Maher, employee Bassel Ibrahim-El-Sayed-Sleim Hachem, employee
Schaefer & Puritan 15901 Schaefer Detroit, Michigan	Mr. and Mrs. Adel Mohamad Kobeissi, owner Khaled Abid Al-Bonijim, employee Moahamad A. Berro, employee



## Lawmakers frustrated with progress, bidding on computer system

2/12/2008, 5:54 p.m. ET

By **DAVID EGGERT**  
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — State social workers who use an archaic computer system to handle foster care, welfare and child support caseloads may have to wait a while longer for new technology.

State officials told lawmakers Tuesday that a \$140 million project is behind schedule — because earlier timetables were unrealistic, legislative changes were enacted and overhauling the system has been extremely complex.

The "Bridges" project was supposed to be launched statewide last month, with other phases finished by October 2009.

But the system likely will not be running until this summer, and only in a few counties on a pilot basis, said Mike Scieszka, an information officer with the Department of Information Technology. When pressed by legislators, he declined to estimate when the system could be operational statewide.

"We're a lot closer than we were," said Scieszka, who was asked to help lead the project just five weeks ago.

Bridges has been billed as a way to improve efficiency and help reduce Department of Human Services employees' high caseloads because they currently can get bogged down navigating three old systems and filing paperwork. High caseloads have been blamed for problems with licensing foster care homes and protecting abused and neglected children.

The House and Senate held two separate hearings Tuesday involving members of four legislative committee to get an update on the project. Lawmakers especially were frustrated by a November 2007 review of the project done by state auditors. It found:

\_The state did not adequately define the roles and tasks of members of a project management team, including six (initially seven) outside consultants each paid roughly \$250,000 a year, or \$5.8 million since 2004 and 2005.

\_Certain consultants appeared to have an advantage in the hiring process because they were listed in the project charter, even though consultant contracts were not bid or awarded until later.

\_Costs for the consultants likely will increase because their contracts do not cover the full time period for developing Bridges.

\_The state inappropriately used one-year IT contracts despite Bridges lasting longer than a year.

\_The state did not define to what extent the new system will reduce workload.

\_The state awarded a \$70 million contract to Deloitte Consulting LLP to develop and implement the project, but 69 of 96 expected results were not required to be finished before getting paid.

"We believe these issues warrant further review," Deputy Auditor General Scott Strong said at a joint Senate hearing.

Senate Families and Human Services Chairman Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, said he does not want to stop the project from going forward because he agrees the existing computer system "just doesn't work." But he raised concerns over the auditor's report and said he wants more accountability in the process.

At a similar House hearing, Rep. Dudley Spade, D-Tipton, questioned whether there is any consequence for contractors who do not deliver their product. Spade heads the subcommittee that helps write the DHS

budget.

Other lawmakers worried about cost overruns. State officials said additional money may be needed, but they would report back later.

Child advocates who are suing the state's foster care system have criticized the computer system used by caseworkers. They also complain that a shoddy system for tracking cases of abused and neglected children will not be improved until after the Bridges installation is finished — and that is now behind schedule.

DHS handles a wide variety of caseloads, including 218,000 welfare cases, 1.2 million people on food assistance and 104,000 child care cases.

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February 12, 2008

## **LAWMAKERS SEEK ANSWERS ON DELAYED D.H.S. COMPUTER SYSTEM**

Michigan's attempt to replace three old computer systems responsible for handling a variety of public assistance programs with a single, more accurate and more efficient system was in the spotlight Tuesday before Senate and House committees, with legislators seeking answers to "some very serious concerns" raised last fall in a preliminary review by the legislative Auditor General.

Administration officials acknowledge the delays in getting the system operational, but told the committees the original three-year timeline set in 2004 was "overly aggressive" given the scope of the project and changes made along the way. They also said at this point, they have not sought additional funding for any cost overruns in the \$140 million Bridges project. [Sen. Bill Hardiman](#) (R-Kentwood), chair of the Senate Appropriations Human Services Subcommittee, said he fully supports the mission of the project but wants more detailed responses to the issues raised by the auditor general at another meeting he hopes to schedule soon.

Michael Scieszka, DHS information officer, said the pilot projects in three counties now should be ready in the June-August period this year, providing there are no changes in policies or mandates and other conditions are met. Full statewide implementation is not expected until late 2009, more than a year after the initial timetable.

He said officials are evaluating whether additional funds will be needed, and will report back within a month that determination. "We are looking at all options to keep within the budgetary estimates," he said.

The system is to be used by DHS and the Department of Community Health for family assistance programs, foster care, Medicaid and food assistance programs to determine eligibility, the amount of benefits and case management.

On one of the auditor concerns regarding lack of specifically-defined goals of the project, Mr. Scieszka said those are spelled out in the requests for proposals from bidders and in the final contract. The goals included providing a system to reduce workload and improve the ability of caseworkers to serve the client. He said one immediate payoff will be to

free up staff time needed to maintain three old systems, allowing DHS staff to concentrate on its core function of assisting families in need.

The preliminary review by auditors also found problems in some project manager contracts, and that some contracts end this year when the project is not expected to be completed until next year.

Deputy Auditor General Scott Strong said the preliminary review the office concluded last fall raised several "very serious concerns," including lack of specific goals and use of a contract procedure designed for one-year projects when the computer system was to be a multi-year project. If the concerns are not address, he said, "I fear Bridges will not meet the needs of the state and could experience cost overruns."

The system is to replace three systems, some of them 40 years old, which consume excessive staff time and increase the chances of error as they switch between different screens and different software that does not interact.

Terry Salacina, director of special projects for DHS, said he is amazed the error rate is as low as it is given the obstacles staff has to overcome.

The contracting process is a key issue for [Rep. Dudley Spade](#) (R-Franklin Twp.), chair of the House Appropriations Human Services Subcommittee, who also expects DHS to ask for additional funds to complete the project. "We need to get to the bottom of this or we will leave the lingering appearance that it was not done right," he said.

Some of the contractor issues raised by auditors were apparent competitive advantages given in some instances, one that was not competitively bid and missing documentation such as how the bid was scored.

And noting some prior problems with DHS computer systems including one implemented in the 1990s that would be replaced with Bridges, Mr. Spade said, "I'm not saying we should pull the plug, but I want to gain greater comfort level that when we get a system done, it does what we want."

Among the issues he will press in that regard is why the Department of Community Health was told that the system will not include functionality to deal with compliance with federal Medicaid mandates.

Mr. Hardiman, underscoring his support for completing a project with the requisite accountability, said, "We need major improvements in the Human Services computer system. What we have now just doesn't work."

Joining in the two hearings were the Senate Families and Human Services Committee and House Families and Children's Services Committee.

 [Click here to return to the Kansan](#)

## Foster daughter testifies dad fathered her child

By Michael P. McConnell  
Daily Tribune Staff Writer

BERKLEY -- A Berkley man's adopted daughter testified Tuesday that he began sexually assaulting her when she was 15 and fathered the child she gave birth to three years later.

Gerald D. Snapp, 43, is jailed on \$1.5 million bond and is on unpaid suspension from his job at the Michigan Department of Human Services, an agency which handles cases involving sexually and physically abused children.

Following a preliminary examination in Berkley 45A District Court Tuesday in which the adopted daughter testified, Snapp was ordered to stand trial on eight counts of varying degrees of criminal sexual assault in Oakland County Circuit Court.

His accuser, now 22, testified that Snapp impregnated her after he came down to her basement bedroom about 3 a.m. in September 2003, three years after she began living in the house as a foster child.

"He climbed on top of me," she said. "He said, 'shush, don't scream.' In January I found out I was four or five months pregnant. In June 2004 I had the baby."

Snapp, dressed in light blue jail garb, kept his head down for most of Tuesday's hearing as he sat at the defense table, glancing up only occasionally.

Snapp began sexually fondling and assaulting his accuser shortly after she began living with Snapp and his wife, who have two biological children and another adopted child, the woman testified.

The first sexual assault happened in September 2000, she said.

"I was laying down on the couch in the front room because I had a headache," she said. "He came up and put his hand under my shirt and was rubbing my breasts. I told him to leave me alone. He went all the way down into my underwear."

The woman described two other incidents in the subsequent three years where Snapp fondled her or engaged in digital penetration against her will. Those sexual assaults occurred in bedrooms where she slept in the house, usually when other children were sleeping nearby or his wife was at work or asleep, she said.

She testified Snapp ultimately had intercourse with her when she was 17 and became pregnant. A DNA test determined that Snapp was the father of her

child.

"(The victim) got no support from the home after she told (Snapp's wife) what had happened," said Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor Robert Giles.

The woman also said she got a very angry reaction from Snapp's wife when she suggested that Snapp was the father of her child.

Giles told the court that the defendant's wife has made threats and phone calls to the victim since Snapp was charged in the case.

Though the woman in the case first talked to police about Snapp allegedly sexually abusing another child in the home in December 2000, she said she didn't speak out about herself at the time because she was conflicted about bringing it up.

In the summer of 2007, the woman contacted Berkley police to make allegations about possible actions by Snapp that could have constituted criminal conduct. However, Giles said without supporting evidence charges were not authorized.

From that contact with police the woman came forth with the statements that laid the foundation for the charges Snapp now faces.

Snapp and his wife face a separate trial at 8:30 a.m. next Tuesday before Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Martha Anderson as authorities seek to terminate the couple's parental rights to their three remaining minor children.

The children have already been removed from the home where the Snapps lived.

Gerald Snapp faces arraignment for trial on the sexual assault charges against him at 1 p.m. Jan. 28 before Oakland County Circuit Judge Mark Goldsmith.

Contact Michael P. McConnell at [mike.mcconnell@dailytribune.com](mailto:mike.mcconnell@dailytribune.com) or at (248) 591-2571.

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## Father sentenced to 40 to 60 years for sexual abuse and solicitation

Judge exceeds guidelines as former prison officer denies wrongdoing

By ANN ZANIEWSKI  
Of The Oakland Press

A 48-year-old Milford man accused of sexually abusing his daughter, starting when she was a child, and of helping her advertise her services as a prostitute as an adult, professed his innocence Tuesday in a tense courtroom.

But Oakland Circuit Judge Shalina Kumar exceeded sentencing guidelines and sent William Pattison to prison for 40-60 years.

Pattison was convicted last month of four counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and one count of pandering.

Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Nicki Weisberger said several years of sexual abuse began when Pattison's daughter was just 4 or 5. Later, when she was an adult, he was accused of helping her set up a posting on the Web site Craigslist that advertised her services as a prostitute, an activity from which he kept the money.

"The sheer volume of the criminal acts defy reason," Weisberger said.

Pattison's daughter, Bridget Pittmann, 27, said the prostitution was one of many things her father made her do in order for her to be allowed to see her own daughter. Pittmann had lost custody of her daughter because of drug use and Pattison's ex-wife got custody of the girl.

The Oakland Press does not normally print the names of sexual abuse victims but Pittmann gave her consent.

Pittmann said in court Tuesday that Pattison caused her to have a "life of horror." She said that she was pleased with his sentence.

"I'm happy because I think, with that amount of time, he won't be able to harm any other children," she said.

Milford police officers began investigating Pattison in summer 2006, when another one of his relatives came forward with allegations that he had raped her. Around the same time, police were alerted to a business card and a posting on the popular Web site Craigslist advertising a woman's sexual services.

Police officers contacted the woman listed on the business card -- later

discovered to be Pattison's daughter -- and set up a meeting in Milford with an undercover officer. She was arrested and convicted of a misdemeanor prostitution charge.

Police learned through investigating the relative's claims that his daughter also may have been abused. Pittmann denied the abuse at first but, fearing that Pattison might harm her daughter, eventually told officers about her experiences.

In court Tuesday, Pattison said he didn't think he received a fair trial.

"Your honor, I didn't commit any of these offenses," he said.

Kumar told Pattison that she believes that he's incapable of taking responsibility for his actions.

The sentencing guidelines called for Pattison to serve a minimum sentence of 10-25 years. In exceeding the top end of that range by 15 years, Kumar said the guidelines did not account for various elements of the case, such as Pattison using his job as a corrections officer to instill fear in his daughter. Pattison formerly worked for the Michigan Department of Corrections as a corrections officer at a facility in Plymouth.

Pattison's attorney, Daniel Randazzo, said he thinks the sentence is unjustly excessive. Randazzo believes Pattison is innocent and said he plans to appeal both the conviction and sentence.

Pattison will get credit for 536 days already served.

Supporters of Pittmann and Pattison filled opposite sides of the tense courtroom for the hearing. After Kumar announced the sentence, Pittmann's supporters clapped.

Pattison is also facing criminal charges for allegedly abusing the relative and a woman with whom he has a young child. Trial dates have not yet been set in either case.

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[http://www.theoaklandpress.com/stories/021308/loc\\_20080213254.shtml](http://www.theoaklandpress.com/stories/021308/loc_20080213254.shtml)



## Autopsy still out on 10-month-old

Wednesday, February 13, 2008

GREENVILLE -- As the parents of 10-month-old Alexi Paul bury their daughter today, authorities await autopsy results to determine the cause of her death. Greenville Department of Public Safety officers were called to the child's home Friday afternoon, where they found the baby unresponsive. An autopsy was conducted Friday, but authorities do not yet have the results, Public Safety Director Michael Stuck said. He would not say why police were investigating the death, nor would he confirm a report in the Greenville Daily News that the child appeared to have been dead for several hours before authorities were called. The baby is the daughter of Ryan Paul and Michelle Hansen.

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Wednesday, February 13, 2008

### Story Update

## Medical examiner: Tot's death was not homicide

**Jessica Dudenhofer and Luke Stier**

Daily News staff writers

Wednesday, February 13, 2008

**GREENVILLE** - No cause of death has yet been determined in the Friday death of a Greenville infant.

Early Friday afternoon Greenville Department of Public Safety officers responded to a report of a child not breathing and unresponsive at 1210 W. Chase St. They arrived within one minute of the call and found Alexi Nicole Paul, the almost 10-month-old daughter of Paul and Michelle Hansen, dead at the home.

Both Public Safety and Kent County Chief Medical Examiner Stephen Cohle agreed that the infant had been dead for several hours.

"I do not have a cause of death," Cohle said. "This is not going to be a homicide and there were no signs of the child being beaten or abused."

He said the infant had been dead for several hours because she was pronounced dead at the scene instead of being transported.

"There is no way of exactly identifying a time of death. It just isn't possible scientifically," Cohle said. "We are having toxicology work done and that should be done in about a week."

Greenville Public Safety Director Mike Stuck said there was "nothing new" with the investigation and the department was continuing to probe while awaiting official results from the medical examiner.

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Article published Feb 12, 2008

## Elder-abuse bills to hit House

DUNDEE - Theresa Dalton and Nancy Harmon, regular visitors to the Dundee Senior Center, said they were aware that elder abuse happens, but they never had known anyone affected by it.

"You know, it's a smaller town," said Ms. Dalton. "The people at the banks and grocery stores know us and say hello."

However, in places around the state without the small-town atmosphere and for those who don't get out frequently, those safeguards don't necessarily exist. That, said state Rep. Kathy Angerer, D-Dundee, is why she wanted to introduce legislation to help protect the elderly population.

"Our grandparents, parents and neighbors have contributed so much to their communities over the years," she said Monday at the senior center. "It's important that we take comprehensive measures to guard against those that seek to victimize seniors, whether it's nursing homes that aren't held accountable for their actions or predatory family or care members."

The package of bills Rep. Angerer was promoting will be introduced into the House soon. They include measures that would make it mandatory for employees of banks and other financial institutions to report suspected elder abuse based on changes in banking and also would make it mandatory to provide joint account holders with a written summary of their rights.

Rep. Angerer told one story in which a 93-year-old woman's granddaughter and her boyfriend moved in under the auspice of becoming caregivers for the woman. When the young woman convinced her elderly relative to put her name on the account, and the account activity drastically changed, a bank teller who knew the woman reported the activity to Adult Protective Services. Rep. Angerer said the investigation ultimately turned up that the woman was being physically abused as well.

Another part of the legislation would prevent those convicted of elder abuse from inheriting the whole estate - or even parts of it - when the senior citizen dies.

"Predators should not be able to profit off of their victim's estate once they die," Rep. Angerer said. "They're getting away with just short of murder, and sometimes even that is in question."

Other legislation in the package would allow a third party to make a criminal complaint on behalf of the victim. Safeguards also would be put in place by creating standard definitions of what abuse and particular rights are.

Ms. Dalton said she could support the legislation but was curious how it would be enforced and wondered how those it could benefit would know about the protective legislation.

"I don't understand how the legislation will be there for the victims," she said. "They are kind of unaware sometimes; they have helpers and do depend on others to assist them. How does the law get to them?"

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## **GUEST OPINION:** State needs more health insurance options

By EDWARD DEEB

Times are changing in regards to Michigan's health care needs. In part, it is due to our struggling economy, and another reason is the growing trend for the need of individual insurance, as it relates to insurance for individuals and families.

Michigan's consumers need more affordable options in health care.

Legislation has been introduced in Michigan that provides affordable health care for those individuals not covered by their employer or spouse. House Bills 5282-5285 provide individuals and their families with fair pricing, the security of knowing they can obtain coverage, and protection against rate hikes -- all resulting in a safety net to reduce the number of uninsured families and individuals. This proposed legislation provides affordable health care, with no bias against current or past health conditions.

We are now seeing a significant shift in the market as to the definition of a business. Many individuals now run a business out of their home or work from their home as a contracted employee. These individuals need health insurance for themselves or their family, and this new legislation provides a much-needed option.

As Michiganian are adapting to a new and downscaled economy, so are its employers. Due to financial burdens, there are many businesses that do not offer group health care to their employees. These firms are now opting out of group insurance, thus leaving employees to seek individual coverage on their own.

Depending on the individual's age and health conditions, it may be an uphill and costly venture to secure coverage under current health care options.

The need for Blue Cross Blue Shield to cover these individuals is vital. We are now seeing young and healthy individuals purchasing coverage from other carriers, while the older and less healthy individuals are being referred for coverage to Blue Cross Blue Shield, the state's insurer of last resort. The question is, how long can Blue Cross Blue Shield continue to take on this risk and still be able to cover those in need of individual insurance at a reasonable price?

Please help our consumers and Michigan's already struggling business community and support legislation that guarantees the ability to get good coverage, affordable health care products, and continuing coverage despite

medical conditions.

*Edward Deeb is President and CEO of the Michigan Business and Professional Association/Michigan Food and Beverage Association in Warren. He may be reached at 586.393.8800 or online at [www.michbusiness.org](http://www.michbusiness.org).*

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# Medicare scam reported in the state

Gladwin County Record

Last updated: Tuesday, February 12th, 2008 03:55:24 PM

LANSING -- The Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP, Inc.) is issuing a warning to Michigan residents with Medicare health coverage.

Medicare beneficiaries in the Detroit, Grand Rapids and the Manistee areas have received calls from someone stating they were from Medicare. The caller requested private information stating they would be issuing new Medicare cards. The information requested was the beneficiaries' Medicare identification number and their bank account numbers.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is not reissuing Medicare cards, nor would they contact beneficiaries at home to ask them for their bank account information and their Medicare number.

Any Medicare beneficiary receiving one of these calls should gather as much information as possible about the caller, name, telephone number where that person can be reached (call-back number), time of day of the call or anything else that government officials could use to track and prosecute the scam artists.

Beneficiaries are urged to call the MMAP toll-free number at 1-800-803-7174, 1-800-633-4227 or 1-800-447-8477 to report any such telephone calls.

"Each year, unscrupulous people find new ways to exploit the elderly and disabled people who have Medicare health insurance. Thank goodness we have committed staff and volunteer counselors to assist people who may feel overwhelmed by the complexities of their health insurance benefits," MMAP Executive Director Jo Murphy said.

MMAP is the state-wide program which provides free health benefits counseling to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers.

With unbiased information provided by staff and volunteers, Michigan residents can make informed health care decisions. MMAP saved Michigan beneficiaries over \$7,000,000 in out-of-pocket costs last year. Approximately 450 individuals statewide serve as MMAP counselors.

MMAP is funded by a grant from the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging through funding received from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

To speak to a local MMAP counselor regarding questions or problems with Medicare, Medicaid or related beneficiary issues, call Council on Aging's MMAP office, 989-426-3843.

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## **New scam targeting area seniors**

Bob Brenzing

Created: 2/12/2008 3:20:42 PM

Updated: 2/12/2008 3:35:13 PM

Grand Rapids - The Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan announced today a warning about

scam targeting Medicare Beneficiaries.

Medicare beneficiaries in Grand Rapids, Detroit and Manistee have been targeted by phone calls from

someone claiming to be from Medicare. They are then asked for bank account and Medicare ID numbers

new cards can be issued.

Those who feel that they have been victimized are urged to contact Mi.

Medicare/Medicaid Assistance

Program at 1-800-803-7174 or HHS Tips at 1-800-447-8477.

The agency urges everyone to use caution and to not share personal information over the phone.

WZZM13.com - New scam targeting area seniors.

# Walk for Warmth sets high goal for tough times

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Tue, Feb 12, 2008

BY PETER DAINING

[pdaining@grandhaventribune.com](mailto:pdaining@grandhaventribune.com)

HOLLAND — Organizers say the annual Walk for Warmth is needed more than ever because of the slowing economy and the rising cost of utilities.

An estimated 300 walkers are expected to brave the winter chill starting at 8:30 a.m. Saturday at the Holland Civic Center, 150 W. Eighth St.

The Community Action Agency hopes to more than double last year's efforts by raising \$50,000 through the event, which will all go to help needy families pay for utilities.

"We know it's a tough time all around — for families and for business," said Bill Raymond, director of Michigan Works!/Community Action Agency.

"What we're learning, however, is that keeping families on their feet before they get too far behind makes great economic sense for the community."

Last year's walk brought in \$17,000. As of Monday afternoon, this year's contributions were already at \$20,000, according to CAA Marketing Specialist Mike Stock.

"Especially with the mortgage issue trickling down to renters, there are more people in trouble than before," Stock said. "So I set the goal higher to reach all these new groups of people that are calling us."

Walk For Warmth is a public event, which will include refreshments during the 8:30 a.m. registration before the 3-mile stroll around downtown Holland.

Stock said 85 Zeeland High School students and around 25 from Grand Valley State University will be walking. U.S. Rep. Peter Hoekstra, R-Holland; state Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland; and state Rep. Bill Huizenga, R-Zeeland, are also expected to attend the event.

Stock said 38 businesses from all over the county have sponsored the event, including several from the Tri-Cities area.

"Businesses deserve visibility for helping the community in this way," he said. "We have a strong focus on the needs of the individual, which is the purpose of this particular event. But in this economy, we can't forget about the needs of business either."

West Michigan Academy of Arts and Academics in Ferrysburg had its own walk on Friday, which also raised money to support the Community Action Agency's utilities assistance program.

CAA helps Ottawa County residents with a variety of housing needs, but the money raised by the Walk for Warmth all goes toward utility assistance. The agency was able to spend close to \$159,000 helping 989 people pay for utilities in 2007, with an average of around \$160 per person.

Individuals and businesses that would like to pledge money for the event can call (616) 393-5615; or send money to the Community Action Agency Walk for Warmth, 12251 James St., suite 300, Holland, MI 49423.

**On the Net:**

[www.miottawa.org/caa](http://www.miottawa.org/caa)